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FCC STAFF WHITE PAPER OUTLINES VISION FOR "DEPLOYABLE AERIAL COMMUNICATIONS ARCHITECTURE" TO IMPROVE THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Federal Communications Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau released a comprehensive white paper outlining a vision for how "deployable aerial communications architecture" (DACA) can be used to provide communications following a catastrophic event when the terrestrial communications infrastructure is severely damaged or unavailable. The white paper includes recommendations to the Commission for next steps on how to incorporate this technology into the Nation's communications infrastructure.

"We are reminded daily that a catastrophic disaster, natural or otherwise, can occur anytime and anywhere. Terrestrial communications services are often severely impaired -- or knocked out entirely -- during these events, which complicates even the most prepared response effort. It is vitally important that we examine technologies that have potential to improve emergency response when these events occur. This white paper starts us firmly on that path." said James A. Barnett, Jr., Rear Admiral (ret.), Chief of the FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. "This study examines the use of state-of-the-art communications capabilities on aerial platforms -- such as piloted aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and balloons -- currently employed by our Nation's military as another valuable tool for our first responders and disaster recovery professionals. We cannot miss any opportunity to equip these men and women with the best communications capabilities as they risk their lives to protect ours and provide our citizens the connectivity they need in the most critical of times."

Entitled *The Role of Deployable Aerial Communications Architecture in Emergency Communications and Recommended Next Steps,* the paper offers an analysis of how DACA could fit into the restoration of communications services in the early hours immediately after a catastrophic event. DACA is deployable 12 to 18 hours after a catastrophic event to restore critical communications, including broadband, temporarily for a period of 72 hours or more. This capability would be useful in situations where the power grid may be inoperable for several days, depleting back-up power supplies and resulting in an almost complete failure of landline, cellular, public safety radio, broadcast, and cable transmissions, as well as Wi-Fi and Internet services.

Based on their conclusions in the white paper, the Bureau recommended several steps for further Commission action:

- Open an inquiry by the end of the year to gather data and address issues such as the role of DACA solutions during catastrophic disasters, radio interference, spectrum coordination, authorization requirements, costs, cost-effectiveness, equipment standards, and operational procedures.

- Host a workshop on DACA solutions by the end of 2011.

- Share findings with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Aviation Administration, and other Federal partners to initiate discussions regarding pilot programs and implementation.

- Working with the Department of State and other appropriate Federal agencies, explore any international implications of these issues.

To view the full white paper, please visit the FCC's home page at www.fcc.gov.

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